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In the earliest part of my schooling on the range, I was warned that nothing was as distracting to man as love sickness. My teachers drilled that lesson over and over.

Comparisons were drawn. Case studies were used as examples. No other portion of my education left so lasting an impression.

I saw the rule proven several times. Before the old boy who drenches out sheep was married, I watched him misfire his syringe aimlessly into the air, as if internal parasites were flying across the horizon.

Goat Whiskers the Younger went into a near coma during his courtship. He had the moon-eyed variety. Young Whiskers would wander into fences and hit gate posts head on. Old man Whiskers had to close gates behind him. Another man had to open them to keep the love struck Whiskers from making a bank shot off the planks.

My brother had the worst case of the three. For his own protection, we had him living at the ranch by himself. Three or four weeks before his wedding, I found him one morning roosting with the peacocks on the windmill tower. His craving for companionship had grown so strong that he could no longer stand the solitude of the ranch house.

One time I saw a trapper fall in love. Now if you think Hollywood specializes in amor, you ought to have seen that hombre operate. Screen lovers have never been who could have cut the steam from his glasses. The killer wolf of the Great Plains could have denned up underneath his bed. Before I could tell what was happening, he wouldn't allow fly paper to be put out around his camp.

It was awful. All doused up in talcum powder, he lost his touch to set a trap. As you may know, once a game biologist loses his body odor, he can't catch a blind mole in an apple box. Trappers have to be seasoned just like their baits. The longer you let one of them soak in his surroundings, the better trapper he makes. You may have heard about catching fish with a piece of soap, but don't you ever waste your time trying to catch a coyote or a trapper that way. In fact, I'd say that would be a good method to run them off.

The story wouldn't complete without telling you how I captured my Indian wife. I was down on a river bank close to their reservation on the fateful day. She and her mother were gathering roots and wild berries.

Times were as hard in the ranch business as they always are. I got to thinking while I was watching them work that there was the kind of wife that a rancher could afford. The Shortgrass Country didn't hear much wild fruit, but I'd seen lots of fat armadillos living off the root systems out here.

You might say it was a preplanned move to economize. I figured she wouldn't be like those paleface women that have to buy a scarf every time they go to town or a bunch of nonsense like hair ribbons or bright colored thread.

For once I wanted to be practical. Well, as you have probably guessed, she turned out to be as demanding as the rest of womankind. I don't think we'd been married six months until she could recite every page in the mail order catalog by memory.

It wasn't any time until she had to have store bought shoes. As far as gathering berries, that went by the wayside, too.

Dynamite wouldn't have had to be invented if the world had been left up to hombres such as myself. I guess I could take a glass of wine and cause it to be a explosive. Everything I touch blows up, one way or the other. The next time I get any big ideas on saving money I'm going to have the sheriff lock me up in his jail.

Sometimes when you are by the ranch, I'll show you were that lovesick trapper was camped.